Facultade de Filoloxía

Grao en lingua e literatura inglesas

A Reassessment of King Richard III's Reputation in Virginia Cross's Benediction: The Love, Honour and Betrayal of Richard III (2017)

Graduando/a: Paula Vila Uruburu
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Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

Since the discovery and positive DNA identification of King Richard III's remains in 2012 around thirty historical novels have been published in the UK in which this controversial English king figures as the main protagonist. Most of them offer a historically revised portrayal of the monarch, far removed from the mythical monster of the Shakespearian play and the Tudor propaganda, by incorporating, adapting and reinterpreting not only the reassessment of his historical reputation undertaken by academic research but also the recent scientific findings about his physical build.

Following Rozett's[1] theory of 'filling in the gaps' (2003: 28), which is considered a most reliable analytical tool for research within the field of historical fiction, and taking into account the shortage of chronicles and sources contemporary to Richard III and the bias of the Shakespearian play and the Tudor sources, it is the aim of this dissertation to analyse his portrayal in one of the most recent British historical novels on the monarch: *Benediction: the Love, Honour and Betrayal of Richard III* (2017) in order to account for the way in which the author has 'filled the gaps' of the monarch's two dimensions: the physical and the moral ones. Another objective will be to explore the author's purpose: is there a possible reassessment and demystification of the king's reputation in this historical novel? As support, this study will also include a thorough reading of and reflection on bibliographical sources and recent scholarship on the matter.

[1] Rozett, Martha T. 2003. *Constructing a World: Shakespeare's England and the New Historical Fiction.* Albany, US: State University of New York Press.

Santiago de Compostela, 02 de Novembro de 2018.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.

The remains of the Last Plantagenet, King Richard III, were discovered in 2012 in a car park of the British city of Leicester. Since then, and since the positive DNA identification, around thirty historical novels have been published in the UK in connection with this very controversial monarch and his torn and contentious life and fame.

Widely known for the Shakespearian play and the Tudor propaganda which blackened his name, Richard III plays the protagonist role within these recently launched novels and is portrayed in a number of different ways; that is, there is an adaptation, reinterpretation and re-evaluation of his historical and traditional reputation not only undertaken by academic research but also triggered by the recent scientific findings about his physical build.

The North American professor and researcher Martha Tuck Rozett unfolds, in her book *Constructing a World* (2003), the foundations of the New Historical fiction genre. Throughout the piece, Rozett explains the so-called theory of "filling in the gaps"; i.e. how writers who face the challenge of writing an historical novel try to fill the blank spaces of history. In regard to our study, these gaps would be filled in by the re-interpretation of the crimes Richard is accused of in the Shakespearean play and in the Tudor historiography.

This theory perfectly meets the historical recreation of this very controversial character due to the huge lack of chronicles and contemporary historical sources about his life and reign, apart from the distorted image given by the Tudor's propagandistic chronicles and by the made-up myth written by Shakespeare.

This dissertation seeks to analyse how the discovery of Richard's remains in 2012 has affected the immediately posterior fiction about him, particularly in Virginia Cross's novel *Benediction* (2017). Besides, focusing on this novel itself, this dissertation will consider whether the author tries to demystify the character of The Last Plantagenet or not and to what end. In order to achieve these purposes, the next methodology will be used: firstly, we will consider the character's two dimensions: his morality and his physical appearance. Secondly, different theories on the topic of Richard's personality and bodily image collected by a range of authors such as Annette Carson and John Ashdown-Hill will be analysed, to compare them later with Cross's interpretation.

The body of this study is divided into two main chapters: a first chapter concerning Richard's moral dimension and a second one which analyses his physical appearance and bodily conception. At the end of the dissertation, some conclusions will be reached and discussed.

Benediction is a revision of Richard's life. From his childhood to his death in 1485, the biography of the king and the most important aspects of his existence which surrounded his life, such as the conflict known as the Wars of the Roses[1], are presented in a slightly different way compared to the one which Shakespeare chose for his play *Richard III* (1593); namely, while the Bard developed a scheming depiction of the character, Cross produced a totally opposite portrayal. I decided to choose this novel as my corpus, and no other, since Cross's novel (2017) is one of the most recently published examples and on this account the novel should collect and reinterpret or adapt

[1] Civil war which took place in England between 1455 and 1487 and which confronted two royal houses or lineages: Lancaster and York. Both families fought for the throne. Finally, this war ended the Plantagenet dynasty and lead to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty, which gained the power.

the brand new discoveries about the figure of Richard III; in other words, I though this novel would be fully up-to-date.

The novel presents a very personal portrait of Richard III and his family. The book starts in 1459, when the whole family is ripped apart since the enemies of the Royal House of Plantagenet started to fight for the English throne. This situation caused chaos and the seven-years-old Richard will have to face this reality and to grow up within a turbulent environment. Through the novel, he is constantly pursued by questions and he struggles with inner debates about love, honour and betrayal. The readers witness how all these questions and doubts, in addition to the challenging situations which Richard must endure, shape the mand and the king he becomes.

In this dissertation, Rozett's theory (2003), which is considered as a most reliable analytical tool for research within the field of Historical Fiction, will help us to analyse the figure of the Duke of Gloucester in one of the most recent British historical novels on the monarch in order to see how the author has filled in the gaps regarding the king's already mentioned two aspects: his physical dimension and his morality, which ultimately were the ones distorted by Shakespeare to build his evil character. Whether the writer seeks to demystify Richard III or to reassess him shall be seen later.

Rozett (2003: 1) finds the answer to "what Historical Fiction must be like" in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980)[2]. She declares that the Italian writer "explains how the historical fiction writer must become immersed in historical evidence"(Rozett, 2003: 1) and that "you must first of all construct a world, furnished as

[2] This novel had critical success and was a bestseller in 1980, since it is a mixture of historical narrative with "popular detective fiction elements" which "invited its readers to view historical fiction as an academically respectable genre" (Rozett, 2003: 1). *The Name of the Rose* provided writers of historical fiction with a specific and innovative manner to reinvent the past.

much as possible, down to the slightest detail" (Eco in Rozett, 2003: 1). Rozett (2003: 2) claims that, although the characters of Historical Fiction's novels might not have an entry on any encyclopaedia, "everything they do could only occur in that time and place" and concludes that the main goal of these books is to make the actual history easier for us to understand. In the case of *Benediction*), I firmly believe that it helps us to reach and understand the figure of The Last Plantagenet better since the novel makes him more human; he is not presented as a monster or as a cursed individual anymore. Therefore, it makes him closer to us as a regular man.

Furthermore, regarding the objectives and work of Historical Fiction's writers, Rozett (2003:3) claims that

> Their authors resort to experimental fictional strategies in order to reimagine those relationships, and so offer readers a more disrupted, fragmented version of "history", requiring them – us – to work harder. Readers of innovative historical fiction often find themselves going back through the novel to fit the pieces together and reconstruct chronology, while confronted with arcane vocabulary, unfamiliar diction, and allusions to period texts – generally without the footnotes or glossaries that accompany editions of past literature.

The researcher points out that it is the writer himself who shapes the fictional dimension "bringing their own knowledge of history to the process" (Rozett, 2003: 3).

What it is going to be explored in the following pages of this dissertation is that, Cross had to face this challenge; that is, she had to fill in the gaps of Richard III's life which were left empty by the chronicles and the historical sources. Therefore, attention will be paid to the way she reassesses Richard's life; summing up, his moral condition and appearance which are the

two dimensions of the character and one of the objectives of this dissertation. Following Rozett's considerations:

> Where the biographer and historian must go on tiptoes, the traditional historical novelist would choose to fill in these blank spaces with imagined detail, to stand boldly, attributing one motive or another for the seemingly inexplicable action, siding, then, with one historian or another by turning his careful surmise into a definite stance (Rozett, 2003: 10).

The previous quote perfectly reflects what Cross does. She includes data, dialogues and information which have been made up for the novel itself and which cannot be found in historical sources or evidence, such as intimate dialogues between the king and his wife or depictions of several dreams the king has.

The main role of Cross, author of *Benediction*, is "not to understand a piece of history and to make it live again" but "to imagine the lives of other human beings without assaulting their essential and, anyway, ineffable mystery" (Garret in Rozett, 2003: 10). Therefore, it is very important to keep the plot mysterious, and, agreeing with Rozett (2003: 10) "the past must remain a foreign country even when the reader's journey has been completed". As will be discussed later, when the readership of *Benediction* ends the book, they do not know for sure or they have not the certainty if what they have read is accurate or simply made up by the writer.

Taking everything into account, it must be also mentioned that, besides Rozett's work, this study also includes a thorough reading of and reflection on bibliographical sources and recent scholarship on Richard III, for instance the research by Kennedy & Foxhall (2015). Besides, my own analysis and

conclusions are given but, as it has been explained above, only the reader can and must reach a conclusion on the topic of the book.

2. Richard's Physical Dimension.

When thinking about Richard III, the first thing which springs in one's mind is the image of a deformed, ugly king. It is the stereotype that, traditionally, has been assumed within the English popular culture. Richard III has been historically demonised and characterised by several different means for centuries. This chapter of the dissertation seeks to examine how the physical dimension of the cursed monarch was represented in literature before the discovery of his remains and how, afterwards, the writer Virginia Cross described this character in her novel *Benediction* in terms of physical appearance.

Although there was no evidence that Richard III had some physical diseases or that he was not in the least attractive before the discovery of his skeleton, people took for granted the literary myth that Shakespeare elaborated in his play *Richard III* and understood this prototype as the truth. Still, even if everyone in the United Kingdom would think that the Shakespearian myth was real, there was a huge scale of public interest in the discovery of his remains. The challenging process which led to the discovery of Richard's remains started in January 2011 when the Richard III Society proposed the University of Leicester Archaeological Services to search for the remains of the king (Kennedy & Foxhall, 20015: 6). Due to the fact that archaeological activities are complex to be carried out in cities, this was a rare request. Furthermore, agreeing with Kennedy & Foxhall (2015: 6), archaeologists do not tend to search for individuals or famous people; indeed, "they have no idea of the names or beliefs of the people whose skeletons they unearth" (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 6).

The discovery of the king's remains could not have been possible if Philippa Langley and John Ashdown-Hill had not led previous research regarding his bodily remains. Everything started with them and with the so-called *Looking For Richard Project*, as Ashdown-Hill (2015: 119 himself claims:

> The *Looking For Richard Project*, led by Philippa Langley, of which I was a founder member, and which, in reality, was responsible for the 2012 search for Richard III's physical remains, always had two objectives. One of these, of course, was to find Richard III's lost grave and body, but the other was to get behind the myths and legends to the true and authentic Richard III.

Nonetheless, even though the project seemed unusual and difficult, it went on since it was an excellent chance to find out new information regarding the friary of Greyfriars[3], the building where the remains of the king had been buried in 1483 by order of Henry Tudor, winner of the battle of Bosworth at which Richard was killed although the actual location was not something certain by the time the research began.

When all the commendatory demands placed on the project were fully met, the workers of the project started to dig in the summer of 2012. Albeit, troubles were everywhere, and problems persisted. The research needed to be stopped because there was not enough funding for the development of the investigation, until the University of Leicester and some other individuals offered financial assistance to maintain the excavations. For example, Philippa Langely collected 10,000 pounds from donations of members of the Richard III Society to finance the excavation. Meanwhile, no one expected to find any bodily remains, as Mathew Morris, from ULAS[4], said: "[…] I think it is rather unlikely that we will actually find the remains of the king given that we are not sure where the church is, where he was buried and whether his remains were exhumed at the Dissolution" (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 14). It seemed that the initial

[3] The name of Greyfriars is a reference to the colour of the robe which these monks used to wear in the Middle Ages.
[4] University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

primary focus had changed and that, at that moment, the Greyfriars issue was the chief objective of the project.

The direction of the excavations shifted to a car park near the present-day cathedral, and they came to a decision to try to dig three different trenches right there. Some skeletons were found at that time, but no one was identifiable as Richard III in any way. After several trenches and work, on September 5th 2012, they discovered the skeleton of the king. At first, they were not aware that that body was the one belonging to the cursed king:

> The feet were missing, and seem to have disappeared long after death, probably as the result of gardening or building activities in later periods. Everything seemed to be proceeding as expected until Appleby reached the middle part of the back (the thoracic vertebrae). Suddenly the line of the spine disappeared – was the skeleton only partially preserved? It was only when she explored the area a little to the left of where the spine ought to have been that she discovered the extraordinary curve (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 20).

As I will explain later, the most striking and flashiest feature of the king in popular and high culture, his deformity, helped to recognise the body as the physical remains of Richard III. Nevertheless, it was not until February 4th 2013 that these remains (officially called Skeleton 1) were officially confirmed as king Richard III's skeleton.

Linking this idea and the discovery with the physical dimension of the literary character of Richard III, it is important to mention that at least the characterization of The Last Plantagenet or the position of his body were quite accurate; it was the key to spot the body in the excavations, as said above. Still, they were "only the bones of a nameless individual" (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 58) until the samples of DNA from the teeth and the thigh bone of the skeleton were analysed. DNA sequencing was developed in two different parts. The first one sought to demonstrate the gender of the so-called Skeleton 1 and also to check the control region which, agreeing with Kennedy & Foxhall (2015; 117) it is a "highly variable section of the mitochondrial DNA in all

tree DNA donors – two living people and one dead individual". This would test whether the genetic relation was real or not and whether the DNA, which had already been identified by Ashdown-Hill as belonging to Richard III, did or did not match that of the king's last descendants (also previously located by Ashdown- Hill).

The results showed that the Skeleton belonged to a male individual. Researchers worked in two different labs to analyse the skeleton's DNA and it was in Toulouse in December 2012 when Professor Turi King from the University of Leicester discovered that there was a "perfect match between Ibsen's DNA" (Michael Ibsen: one of Richard III's last descendant already identified by Ashdown-Hill some years before the discovery of the remains) "and that from Richard's bones" (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 118). The good news was announced in a press conference on February 4th 2013.

Now, let's come back to the field of arts and literature and the image which people used to have of Richard III before the recently explained discovery. Agreeing with Kennedy & Foxhall (2015: 1), he "has been represented as villain, most famously, but not exclusively, by Shakespeare, assisted in the twentieth century by Laurence Olivier, whose iconic performance in film […] has become a benchmark in modern times".

It would also be fair to mention that some other authors, especially George Buck (c. 1560-1622) with his work *The History of King Richard the Third* (1619) and essayists like Horace Walpole (1717-1797) with his *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* (1768), were enthusiastic about the cursed king and Kennedy & Foxhall (2015: 2) considered that "he has been romanticised as a hero wronged by the Tudors and by the fate which relegated him to the losing side in history".

Researchers have been trying to figure out how he actually used to look like, mixing both primary sources (e.g. archaeological proofs) and secondary sources such as texts and paintings. Even though figuring out his physical dimension was still a real challenge right before the discovery of his remains in 2012, these authors already included in their works the method Rozett (2003) called "filling in the gaps".

As Kennedy & Foxhall (2015: 2) state, although the details of "the fate of Richard's body after the Battle of Bosworth" differ and might vary, everyone agreed that the king was carried to Leicester and displayed publicly "so that everyone could see […] that the king was genuinely dead". As the chronicler Polydore Virgil described:

> Meanwhile, they took Richard's body to the Franciscan Priory in Leicester, stripped of all clothing and placed on a horse's back with the head, arms and legs hanging down on either side; a sorry sight by Hercules, but one worthy of the man's life; and there, after two days, he was buried in the ground without any funerary honours (Vergil (1512-13) in John Ashdown-Hill, 2012: 85)

While it was often said that Richard was a hunchback, archaeologists within the discovery confirmed that the disease, which the king actually had, was Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (see appendix, image 1).

This disease, normally shortened to AIS, is described as follows:

> AIS is by far the most common type of scoliosis, affecting children between ages 10 to 18; it's found in as many as 4 in 100 adolescents. In general, AIS curves progress during the rapid growth period of the patient. While most curves slow their progression significantly at the time of skeletal maturity, some, especially curves greater than 60o, continue to progress during adult-hood. (https://www.srs.org/patients-and-families/conditions-and-treatments/parents/scoliosis/adolescent-idiopathic-scoliosis. Last accessed 02.27.2019)

Taking into account a 3D model of the spine of Richard III which the University of Leicester created to illustrate the disease in the king's back, Pappas (2014, https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html Last accessed 05.09.2019) affirms that "the curve in Richard's spine was immediately obvious,

confirming an anatomical anomaly that had long been controversial". Hepburn (http://www.richardiii.net/2_4_0_riii_appearance.php#portrait Last accessed 04.23.2019) also claims that, indeed, there are no portraits made during Richard's lifetime and this matter added mystery to the reliability of the description of the "poisonous bunch-backed toad" by Shakespeare in his 1593 play.

Agreeing with Lund (2015: 5), Richard's physical representations were hidden and probably it was the king himself who wanted to keep any sign of his disease as a secret until his death. Lund (2015: 5) points out that "it is highly likely that Richard took care to control his public image" since the king's appearance was "part of the propaganda of power". Richard III probably tried to disguise his disease with his clothing: "tailoring probably kept the signs of scoliosis hidden to spectators outside the royal household of attendants, servants and medical staff who dressed, bathed and tended to the monarch's body" (Lund, 2015: 5).

Pappas (2014) explains that researchers were not sure whether the Shakespearean physical depiction had any true base, or it was simply elaborated in order "to please the political enemies of the king's Plantagenet family line" (https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html. Last accessed 02.19.2019)

Richard III has always been linked to the disease of scoliosis due to the statement made by the medieval historian John Rous about the king being a man "with unequal shoulders, the right higher and the left lower" (Pappas, 2014 https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html. Last accessed 02.19.2019). The real skeleton found in Leicester entails further details of this disease:

> The scans and model showed that Richard III had a right-sided, spiral-shaped curve that peaked at thoracic vertebrae 8 and 9, approximately at his mid-back. The curve was well-balanced, meaning that Richard III's spine got back in line by the time it hit his pelvis. As a result, his hips were even, the researchers report today (May 29) in the journal The Lancet. Richard III would not have limped or had trouble breathing due to his condition, which are common side effects of severe scoliosis. (https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html. Last accessed 02.19.2019)

Turning to the topic of his height, the mythical Richard III was a small man, out of the period's average height; i.e. he was believed to be short. Due to his disease, researchers explained he was shorter than usual. Appleby (in Pappas, 2014: https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html. Last accessed 02.19.2019) explains that if Richard III had not had scoliosis, he would have been circa 1.7 meters. That was a little above the average height for a male in medieval Europe. Anyhow, Appleby (in Pappas, 2014: https://www.livescience.com/45974-model-twisted-richard-iii-spine.html. Last accessed 02.19.2019) adds that neither his disease nor his height "kept Richard III from being an active individual".

The Greyfriars Research Team (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 124) also showed that there is a 96% probability that the Last Plantagenet was blue-eyed and a 77% which assesses that he might have had blonde hair, "though he may have [only] remained blonde in early childhood" (2015: 124); i.e. although he might have been blonde in his adolescence, he might have had darker hair as an adult. These rates were taken from the DNA sequencing of the skeleton.

Now that the reader can figure out the truth behind the myth of The Last Plantagenet, it is interesting to analyse how Virginia Cross depicted the king in her work *Benediction* and how she managed to fill in the gaps of his reputation. As this author's novel was released after the discovery of Richard's remains, she could choose to continue the established physical dimension of the Shakespearean myth or she could

break with the tradition and describe her own king Richard based on true facts and, of course, based on the research and on the recent excavations. By doing this, Cross follows two different purposes: on the one hand, she delves into the demystification of Richard III regarding to his physical appearance; on the other hand, she encourages the reader to reassess the moral dimension of the king in opposition to that of the popular and high cultures.

Notwithstanding, the author of the novel cannot help agreeing with some features of the widely spread depiction of the king. Regardless of diseases and deformations, Virginia Cross accepts the fact of Richard III being small sized: "But Jack, he's [Richard] so small!" (Cross, 2017: 66). The author also reflects on how Richard is tired of this kind of comment on his appearance: "He was tired of hearing that. Tired of people commenting about his size as though it were time for him to do something about it" (Cross, 2017: 66). Of course, she is adapting and inventing all the dialogues and reflections of the protagonist, since it is one of the main features of the New Historical Fiction's genre, as Rozett (2003: 2) explains.

Before continuing with some other aspects described by the writer, I would like to point out something which I have noticed while analysing the novel. On the one hand, Virginia Cross does not devote many lines or pages to depict Richard III in a physical way, but, on the other hand, she introduces and presents the rest of the characters of the novel with descriptions plenty of details. Let me give an example: when the author introduces the character of Bennett, Richard's tutor, she writes that Bennett is "a small, *dark man*[5] with a *thin moustache* that twitched when he talked, giving him a semblance to a nervous mouse" (Cross, 2017: 69). This is not an

[5] Whenever I use italics within the body of this thesis, it is to point out the most important information of every quote.

exception. At another point of the novel, for instance, one lady is said to be "a large woman with a *florid* face" and to have "*heavy brows* that gave her a *fierce look*" (Cross, 2017: 202). Personally, it strikes me the fact that, in a book in which characters are so deeply depicted, the protagonist is briefly and poorly described. It must be born in mind, though, that the characters' descriptions which I have quoted above are actually secondary characters' depictions and they lack importance in comparison with the role of the monarch within the novel.

Surprisingly, as the reader will see later in this dissertation, the moral depiction of Richard III is way richer compared to the physical one. To my mind, this is quite an extraordinary literary technique, since Cross is avoiding focusing on the bodily complexion of the king. In relation with his bodily conception, Cross leaves a halo of mystery. Maybe the writer did not want to give details on the physical appearance of the monarch in order to pay attention mostly to his personality and behaviour (which will be explored in the following chapter), so that she could reassess his historical reputation. Through the whole piece, Virginia Cross is very kind with this historical figure so perhaps she chose not to describe him deliberately. In a world where everyone knows about the physical complexion of The Last Plantagenet (or, at least, how it was reputed to be), Virginia Cross puts the stress on his mind and personality; that is, the moral condition of a mature, strong-willed and capable man. Even though we have been told that Richard III was an ambitious and totally insensitive monarch, in this novel we find the reverse depiction: Cross shows us a sensitive, comprehensive and sympathetic regular boy who becomes the king of England. Especially in the first passages of the book, when the author describes his childhood and growth, the readership will notice that the writer depicts the young monarch as an emotional and fragile kid who is very attached to his family several times. Not only does Cross accentuate the fact that the

whole family have overcome some challenging experiences, such as running away from their home, but also that these issues may have led him to become sensitive and delicate.

Does she say anything about his disease, or does she mention the curve of his spine? Not really. She leaves the gaps empty. From a personal point of view, perhaps she took it for granted and again, his deformation was neither an important nor a serious matter for her. Virginia Cross seems to put some distance between the traditional myth and her own character. She is not refusing the recent discoveries about Richard III's appearance, but she does not delve deeply into these aspects either.

Nevertheless, the writer says few words emphasizing his handsomeness. This I find very interesting, since traditionally this king was not believed to be attractive but the opposite. About the adult and mature Richard, the narrator tells the reader that he "had grown *broad* in the chest and in shoulders" and that his face "had matured into a kind of *grave handsomeness* which softened when he smiled" (Cross, 2017: 208). Whether Cross respected or followed the results of the reconstruction of the monarch's face carried out by Professor Caroline Wilkinson[6] is a very interesting matter (see appendix, image 2). Although the description of Richard's face is pretty brief in the novel, it can still be concluded that the author is following the facial reconstruction made by Wilkinson. Furthermore, Cross reinforces the idea of the maturity of the monarch's visage. However, in the reconstruction the king displays a pleasing smile. The facial reconstruction might have inspired Cross in the composition of her character. Even so and as already mentioned, Cross does not give further details of his face's appearance so the reader cannot develop any deep comparison between the two images.

[6] Caroline Wilkinson, Professor of craniofacial identification at the University of Dundee, was the one responsible for the challenge of reconstructing Richard's face.

One more time, Cross will be following the steps of Rozett's conception of the genre, since she may be leaving this gap empty intentionally. Cross wants this conundrum to remain still.

Historically, we have several versions and depictions of Richard III. In any case, some of them were rather caricatures than actual representations. Tudor chroniclers' aim was to blacken the name of The Last Plantagenet, so they would commission altered portraits which represented the monarch in a far-fetched way:

> The earlier portraits, such as that belonging to the Society of Antiquaries, which although not painted in his lifetime are based on originals that could have been done from life, show no sign of deformity. Later portraits, further from the lost originals, and painted to fit in with the established myth, show uneven shoulders and a villainous countenance. The raised shoulder of the Windsor portrait can be shown under X-ray to be a later addition to a painting with a normal shoulder line (Hepburn: http://www.richardiii.net/2_4_0_riii_appearance.php#portrait Last accessed 04.23.2019).

So, bearing both facts in mind (the current facial representation of the king, on the one hand, and the historically distorted pictorial evidences, on the other hand), it can be gathered that Virginia Cross did not want to follow the later traditional trend and that she could have been inspired by Wilkinson's reconstruction.

While the countess of Desmond, Katherine[7], declared that she had danced with the king and that "he was the *handsomest man* in the room […] and that he was *very well made*" (Walpole in Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 185) and some other people personally met Richard during their lifetimes like Nicholas von Poppelau (a nobleman from Silesia), who claimed that he was impressed by his physical appearance and that he did not have a hunchback (Kennedy & Foxhall, 2015: 129), there are other sources which offer a different depiction. For instance, in the mainly propagandistic chronicle

[7] Katherine Desmond. Irish noblewoman belonging to the FitzGerald dynasty. Very popular among chroniclers due to her longevity. There are some discussions in regard to the dates of her birth and death, since no scholar seems to agree. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katherine_FitzGerald,_Countess_of_Desmond. Last accessed 06.02.2019).

by John Rous[8] *Historia Regum Angliae* the author confesses that Richard III was not only "strange looking but a *malign, cursed* from birth [baby born]" (Kennedy & Foxhall 2015: 129). Definitely, the author of the novel I am analysing supports the view that The Last Plantagenet was not disgusting in a physical way but handsome and strong. Neither does she confirm whether the king was blue-eyed, fair or even blonde. However, it is quite clear that Cross rejects the scheming depiction of the king that Shakespeare and other writers such as Thomas More included in their works.

Cross mentions the unevenness of his shoulders but, nonetheless, the data she gives to the reader has nothing to do with AIS. She does not say whether this was or not public knowledge in the novel, and no other character in the plot seems to be aware of Richard's condition (or, at least, no one mentions it). Cross "fills in the gaps" by adapting Lund's conclusions (2015: 5) that it would have been possible for Richard to keep his scoliosis as a secret issue. Then again, I firmly believe she does not want to spend a lot of time speaking about the condition of the king's back, since it has been vastly developed in several literary works such as *Richard III* (1593) by William Shakespeare or *The History of King Richard III* (1513) by Thomas More.

Only in one letter at the end of the novel it can be understood that the writer indirectly speaks of his deformation: "the position of his body on the bed the emblem of his life: one hand extended toward Anne, but not touching her, his body turned away. Could he never put himself wholly in one direction?" (Cross, 2017: 412). Even though throughout the novel it can be detected that Richard is totally aware of his size, Cross does not really includes what he thinks about this body position, although the character

[8] John Rous (1411-1491) was an antiquary and chantry priest at Warwick and the author of *Historia Regum Angliae* (circa 1480). This work comprises a general history of England. The purpose was to inform king Edward IV (Richard's brother) about several monarchs and about the monuments of some members of the clergy buried at St George's Chapel in Windsor. (https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/john-rous-history-of-the-kings-of-england. Last accessed 06.02.2019).

seems to be conscious of his condition and of his damaged back; however, it is not mentioned whether this is something wicked or evil for him. Still, focusing on the above-quoted extract, it might be that the king is not comfortable with this condition, especially if we take into account that his question might be rhetoric. The reader cannot know with certainty whether the bodily position of the king occurs spontaneously or because of an illness. The author establishes a metaphor between the king's physical unbalance and his doubts in terms of friendships and loyalty. His whole life has been unstable. While in a vast amount of works within the literary tradition it was believed that he was a traitor and that he did not really care about the feeling of the people he was mistreating, in this novel it is not clear whether he was the betrayer or the betrayed one. What is obvious is that he has feelings and that he is not satisfied with the reality surrounding him. Then again, Virginia Cross does not highlight the disease of the king and this is totally innovative, since the most famous physical feature of this figure within literature, i.e. the hunchback, seems to be omitted in this novel, while traditionally and during centuries his deformation has been the primary focus of every single novel with Richard III as the main character. Cross might have chosen to follow the following line of thought regarding The Last Plantagenet's condition, i.e. he did not suffer from any deformation, he did not have a hunchback which is also the scientific conclusion of the recent research on his physical dimension.

At this stage, I believe I can safely say that Virginia Cross's attempt to demystify Richard III and his physical façade is quite clear. By eschewing further details of his appearance and deliberately leaving blank spaces, she successfully captures the attention of the reader and gives more weight to the issue of Richard's morality. She remarkably tries to give a new scope of this character, far from the deformation assumptions which for ages were encircling the figure of this enigmatic

monarch. When reading the whole novel, the reader forgets about the misrepresented, caricatured image of the Shakespearean myth of Richard III. Her aim of sweetening his mythical representation is done by means of softening his physical dimension within the novel, the same as she does with his moral dimension or psyche. If she had tried further to convince the audience about how mistaken everyone had been before, she may have lost some reliability. She succeeds because of her subtleness and her clever choice of words when describing the protagonist. For instance, she describes Richard through the words of another character (William Hobbes, not only a character but also a real historical figure: Richard's own personal court physician) as "a handsome man, too, *in his way*" (Cross, 2017: 403). What does the author intend to tell us? That maybe the monarch was neither as handsome as his brother King Edward nor the monster which the Tudor historiography and Shakespeare portrayed for centuries? That is the kind of ambiguous language Cross uses in order to avoid a detailed bodily depiction of the protagonist. She never said anything about why she decided to avoid giving further details of Richard's physical dimension even though she seems to agree with the facial reconstruction of Richard III in regard to his fairness. The colour of his skin has been said to be pale, and within the novel there is a line where the reader can find a reference to this statement: "Up, lads. I don't know why I should call you green, though, when you are *as pale as any louts I've seen*" (Cross, 2017: 67).

In conclusion, Cross tries to demystify the monarch by avoiding giving further details of his physical appearance. Her attempt to shift the focus to his moral dimension rather than to his façade is simply a success. The lack of physical descriptions throughout the novel gives the reader a chance to empathize with what is extensively explained in the novel: the personality of The Last Plantagenet.

Traditionally, plays such as the world-famous work by Shakespeare used to put the stress on how Richard III would look or on his diseases. Nevertheless, Cross disregards tradition and gives the green light for a new conception of the king, which does not focus on his deformities but on his mind.

3. Richard III's Moral Dimension.

In this chapter, attention will be paid to the moral conception of Richard III, a king who has been demonised for centuries, since the myth created by William Shakespeare (mainly influenced by Tudor's chroniclers) was immediately understood as something real and accurate by his readership. Besides, the Tudor propaganda and historiography did not help this historical figure to enjoy a good reputation within the English population. The main focus of this chapter and the matter which will be explored in the following pages is the analysis of Richard' moral dimension in Cross's novel in order to find out whether the author portrays The Last Plantagenet as actually evil and the author of the several crimes he is accused of in the Shakespearean play and in the Tudor propaganda or whether his maligned conception is just a literary legend:

> We accept Richard either as a manipulated victim of Tudor propaganda, or as the scheming monster of Shakespeare's play, but by promoting these stereotypes, writers and historians moved inexorably away from whoever the real Richard III actually was, and these distorting ideas have survived through the generations (Cunningham, 2003: 1).

Richard III has been maligned by Shakespeare and the Tudor sources. He has been held responsible for at least the following murders: those of Henry VI, his son Edward of Lancaster, Prince of Wales, the Duke of Clarence, the Little Princes in the Tower and his wife Lady Anne Neville:

> The list of Richard's numerous alleged victims is wonderfully – and very completely – summarised by the succession of ghosts who prevent his sleep on the last night of his life in Shakespeare's famous play. […] However, the crime of murder is normally defined as the unlawful, premeditated killing of one human being by another (Ashdown-Hill 2015: 39).

As Murph (1984: 1) states, Richard III has been traditionally considered to be the murderer of all the people mentioned before. I will explore how Virginia Cross deals with these accusations, i.e. whether her reinterpretation of Richard's innocence or guilt in these crimes agrees or differ with theories and sources put forward by other scholars. I deliberately chose these cases in particular, rather than others, because the victims of these assassinations were directly linked to the monarch since most of them were very close relatives. For this reason, these murders have been regarded as the most execrable ones. Furthermore, I will examine whether Cross's adaptation of Richard's moral dimension has made an impact on the reassessment of his historical reputation.

This topic is extremely challenging for researchers since all these deaths are "clouded in uncertainty" and, consequently, "speculation about Richard's role in them has flourished" (Murph, 1984: 1).

The character, being traditionally believed to be dark and dangerous, is presented in Cross's novel (2017: 46) as a sensitive, sympathetic boy: "such a perfect, mannerly child". Like Murph (1984), Virginia Cross seems to justify some aspects of Richard's behaviour by presenting the turbulent context in which he was raised. It is the way in which this author readjusts the story and fills in the gaps:

> In the morning, Dame Paston explained to Richard and George the news […]. Their father, their brother Edmund, and many of their father's men were killed, a number of them unarmed, as they foraged for food. […] No Plantagenet could rest until dim-witted King Henry and his wife, the wicked Queen Margaret, were defeated (Cross, 2017: 38).

As the reader can see throughout the novel, Cross puts the stress on the difficulty of the monarch's life and on how unstable and cruel his environment was. With this technique

she succeeds in what I personally believe to be her main goal: to make the reader feel sympathy for Richard.

From the very beginning of the novel, we, as readers, feel compassion for young Richard. In addition, while Cross did not spend a lot of time describing the character in a physical way, as explained in the previous chapter of this dissertation, she did reinforce not only the strong points of his personality but also and specially his weakness. This I find quite interesting, because since the discovery of his remains in 2012, most of the novels on Richard III introduce the character in the same way as Cross (2017) does. It seems now to be a trend within the most recently published works in regard to Richard III to portray him as sensitive protagonist in opposition to the famous representation of the wicked Richard III.

The main strategy in Cross' novel is to accentuate and to underline the idea of the king's chaotic lifetime rather than making a benevolent description of his moral dimension. In the eyes of Cross, Richard III is not evil. Rather, she emphasises the evil of the context of his life. She is not changing the tradition by giving to her readership a mirror image of Richard III; she innovates by explaining the reason which led The Last Plantagenet to be like that: mature, grave, balanced and emotional.

Cunningham (2003: 1) claims that there is a debate in regard to Richard III in which "most of us would offer an opinion as to whether he was a virtuous king maligned by history or an evil schemer who murdered his way to the throne".

Bearing in mind that Cross introduces the character and his mind in a very innovative way as compared to that of the old tradition; that is, presenting his weakness and his fears and his chaotic surroundings and turmoil, let's now explore the famous "crimes" he is expected to be guilty of.

Since this part of the essay can be quite dense and long, I have decided to divide it in different sections; one for each of the crimes in chronological order.

Each subsection seeks to outline whether Cross depicted Richard III as the one responsible for each murder and it also analyses how Virginia Cross adapts, reinterprets or includes several versions and theories put forward by scholars.

3.1 Edward of Lancaster, Prince of Wales.

Young prince Edward, aged 18 in 1471, was killed in combat during the Battle of Tewkesbury. Anyhow, the fate and death of the heir to former king Henry VI has been questioned throughout history. There are different and diverse interpretations about his death and about the involvement of Richard III in his murder.

Although some opposite theories will be explored in the next lines, Cross reinterpreted the next hypothesis: the prince was one of the fallen soldiers at the battle; that is, he was not killed on purpose. The battle was led by Edward IV (brother of Richard, Duke of Gloucester) but in the novel there is no hint at Richard's participation in the Prince of Wales' murder. Rather, his death is interpreted by Cross as part of the consequences of the battle itself:

> Martin was killed, poor ignorant youth who couldn't even catch a horse and probably didn't know a petard from a pikestaff. *Edward of Lancaster died, too. His body lay face down in the grass.*
>
> "Henry's pup" George said. He nudged the boy's leg with his toe, then smiled at Richard. "Well? Are you not glad?" (Cross, 2017:191).

Whereas the Duke of Clarence seems to be satisfied with what could be considered to be the prize of the battle, Richard (at that moment still very young, circa 19 years old) is described as shocked:

> Richard's head was swimming. Now that the battle fury had left him, he felt all his strength ebbing away. He should sit down. Thinking clearly seemed beyond him. […] Revulsion crawled like a poisonous insect along Richard's skin (Cross, 2017: 191).

In fact, Cross argues that the actual murderer was Richard's brother, George, Duke of Clarence. At one point, Richard III asks his brother if he has assassinated Edward of Lancaster. He answers: "No, just now. He was fleeing and I took him down. The fool should have never left his mother's side" (Cross, 2017: 191). While the Tudor tradition has always depicted The Last Plantagenet as a cruel man, Cross presents here, and generally, a sensitive man in opposition to his two brothers, King Edward IV and George of Clarence, who lack sympathy and who are constantly pursuing power and wealth.

Through several extracts, Cross wants her readership to bear in mind Richard's inexperience in the field of war by the time these events took place and how both the Battles of Barnet (1471) and of Tewkesbury (1471)[9] led to the young prince's mind struggle.

Now that the version of *Benediction* regarding this murder has been explained, let's analyse the way in which Cross "fills in the gaps" coincides with some scholars' interpretations or depart from theirs.

While Cunningham (2003: 14) confirms that young Richard had "acquitted himself with great honour in the mêlée, when many of his retainers were killed" during his first military command (The Battle of Barnet), Cross does not support this view. As mentioned above, she depicts a terrified Richard before his first battle starts: "Two hours before dawn and Richard had not slept. […] Still misty and cold" (Cross, 2017: 170).

[9] These battles were decisive for Edward IV to re-win the throne. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019: https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Barnet. Last accessed 06.02.2019).

The idea of fear is being established as the main topic of this chapter of Cross's novel: "Fear purifies you. It can help you concentrate. You must find a balance, though. If you are too afraid, you will draw yourself into danger. But you don't want to be calm, either. You can't be thinking of your lady's kiss after the battle" (Cross, 2017: 170).

Richard was reputed to be a great warrior and military commander so Cross might be trying to demystify the scheming Richard III by gifting him with such fears and emotions. Cross would be filling in the gaps by emphasising his emotional side. In other words, Cross is probably making an attempt to radically change Richard's moral dimension in order to offer her readers a reassessment of The Last Plantagenet's reputation.

Nevertheless, Cross and Cunningham (2003: 15) agree on one point: how the life of the Prince of Wales came to an end. Cunningham explains that "the *death in battle* of Henry VI's heir Edward, Prince of Wales, ended Lancastrian hopes". This researcher, whose work was written before the discovery of Richard's bodily remains, also adds that "Edward was killed as the Lancastrians were massacred, along with many of the nobles who could have continued the Lancastrian cause" (Cunningham, 2003: 16). There is no accusation which points to Richard as the murderer of Henry VI's heir to the throne.

Cross's interpretation also considers Jones' theory (in Carson, 2013: 283): "They were fully aware that Henry VI's had no son other than his sole heir, *cut down in the aftermath of the battle of Tewkesbury"*. Again, this scholar does not seem to condemn Richard for the death of Edward of Lancaster.

Ashdown-Hill, who (as explained in the previous chapter) is primarily responsible for the project which resulted in the discovery of the Duke of Gloucester's

remains has also something to say with regard to the death of Edward of Lancaster and Richard's role in it. Ashdown-Hill (2015: 40-41) contemplates different theories of this "crime" and the implication of The Last Plantagenet in every hypothesis. He finds interesting that, although it is possible that there was a rivalry between both young princes due to their love triangle with Anne Neville (first married to Edward, then to Richard), this has never appeared as the main cause in the theories blaming Richard for Edward's murder:

> Thus Anne's marriage to Edward could well have been a cause of personal animosity on Richard's part towards the Lancastrian prince. Interestingly, however, none of the accounts of Richard's involvement in the death of Edward of Westminster make any use of this possible motive! (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 40-41).

Ashdown Hill (2015: 41) does support the idea, which Cross will later adapt in her work, that "the outcome of the battle of Tewkesbury was disastrous for the Lancastrian cause. Somerset [10] and Edward of Westminster both died as a result of the battle. […]. Notwithstanding, accounts of the death of Edward of Westminster vary".

While some authors explain, the *Benediction*'s version too, that the Prince of Wales was "killed on the battlefield, together with several other great lords and a very large number of ordinary soldiers"(de Commynes in Ashdown-Hill , 2015: 41), later accounts propose that "like 'Somerset', Edward of Westminster had been captured alive, and was then put to death after the battle had ended" and that he was killed by "King Edward IV and his two brothers [Richard and George]" (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 41).

A letter written by George, Duke of Clarence, after the battle, claims that "Edward, late called Prince… [was] slain in plain battle" (Scofield in Ashdown-Hill ,

[10] Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset (26 January 1436 – 15 May 1464). He was a high-ranking commander, belonging to the Lancaster faction (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Beaufort,_3rd_Duke_of_Somerset. Last accessed 06.02.2019).

2015: 42). Hence, Cross seems to agree with Ashdown Hill (2015: 42): "there is therefore absolutely no contemporary evidence that Edward of Westminster was killed after the battle, let alone that Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was in any way involved in the young man's death".

Taking everything into account, Cross's inspiration for *Benediction* comes from scholars and researches like Ashdown-Hill and Carson (2013), who support the view that Richard III had nothing to do with the death of young Prince Edward of Westminster.

By exonerating Richard of this crime, the author reveals the first step in the moral reassessment of the Duke of Gloucester. Besides, Cross encourages the reader to sympathize with him.

3.2 Henry VI.

Closely linked to the death of Edward of Westminster, the death of his father, the former king Henry VI of Lancaster, is also extremely controversial.

The young Prince of Wales was the only heir to the king who reigned between 1422 and 1461. By the time of the Battle of Barnet and the Battle of Tewkesbury, Henry VI had been ruling the nation for a second time (1470-1471)[11] until he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. He is traditionally believed to have died there.

In Cross's novel, Henry VI is said to have been executed by order of king Edward IV. The author's interpretation proposes that both Richard and his soldiers

[11] Henry VI of England (1421-1471) reigned twice: between 1422 and 1461 and again from 1470 until 1471. In 1461 he was deposed because he was defeated at the Battle of Towton (29 March 1461). Edward IV reigned since then until 1470. Furthermore, Henry VI was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1465. Although he was able to rule the country one more time, Edward IV regained power in 1471 after killing Henry's only heir (Edward of Westminster) in battle and after sending Henry VI to the Tower again (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VI_of_England. Last accessed 05.24.2019).

entered the Tower but it is not explained whether Richard himself killed Henry VI or whether he only performed the role of a witness of the situation:

> When Richard entered Henry's tower chambers with James Tyrrel and another of Edward's men, Henry was sitting quietly in the chair by the window, his hands lying palms up on his lap, as if waiting to receive blessing. He smiled at them as they came in.
> […]
> "It's done", Richard said (Cross, 2017: 194).

Cross fills in the gaps in the following way: Edward IV orders the execution of the old king and he directly addresses Richard to supervise it.

Edward does not care whether his brother himself executes Henry VI or whether he simply sends his men to do so. The last Plantagenet totally opposes this radical measure and Cross decides to maintain the halo of mystery and uncertainty; the reader does not get to know whether Richard finally killed the king or if he was a mere witness. However, the author does say that Richard was in the room while the deposed monarch was put to death.

For Cross, the one responsible for Henry's death is Edward, his brother; i.e., Edward IV is the moral murderer of Henry VI. Then again, as it also happened with the young Prince of Wales, everything was part of king Edward IV's strategy. Cross accuses this character of both deaths: "Anyway, it is not your hands the blood stains, it is mine" [says Edward] (Cross, 2017: 195). Thus, Cross (2017: 195) explicitly highlights this guilt in Edward's own words: "I ordered his death".

In Cross's novel, Richard's eldest brother wants the people to think that the mentally unbalanced Henry VI died because of deep displeasure since his son had recently passed away. Furthermore, he wants the execution to be carried out secretly: "You can do it however you will so long as you understand *the cause of his death is pure displeasure, grief after Lancaster's death in battle"* (Cross, 2017: 194). This is

what Edward tells Richard. As explained before, he orders Henry's death and expects Richard to be the responsible for the execution. Still, Richard is not pleased with this decision.

Although Cross does not include the precise date of the death of Henry VI in her hypothesis and she only mentions that it happened in May 1471 (shortly after his son's death), Ashdown-Hill (2015: 43) analyzes different versions of the tale, in which dates differ. Based on a testimony written by John Warkworth[12], Ashdown-Hill's interpretation (2015: 44) proposes the night of 21st May 1471 as the exact date of the king's assassination. However, the former chronicler wrote that "on the morrow he [Henry VI] was chested and brought to Paul's, and his face was open that every man might see him. And in his lying he *bled on the pavement there*; and afterwards at the Black Friars was brought, *and there bled new and fresh*" (Warkworth in Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 43). This theory makes us think that the death might have been violent rather than natural, which agrees with Cross's interpretation.

Cross might have followed Ashdown-Hill's considerations (2015: 44) since he states that "there is certainly no solid evidence to support the traditional allegation that the death of Henry VI took place at the hands of Richard" although, he also claims that Shakespeare presented a totally opposed version in *Henry VI Part 3* (1623) in which not only Richard murders the old king but he also tells him that he has previously ended his young son's life too. Cross might have also included the thoughts of Ashdown-Hill (2015: 45) regarding the fact that Edward "may have ordered Henry's death" and that probably, as Cross highlights through Richard's thoughts, "Richard may well have disapproved of such action" (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 45).

[12] English churchman and academic (c. 1425-1500), well-known for his work *The Warkworth's Chronicles* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Warkworth. Last accessed 05.25.2019).

On the one hand, it might be concluded that Cross supports Ashdown-Hill's perspective on the matter, but what about some other scholars' theories? Is Cross's novel influenced by some other interpretations?

Cunningham (2003: 16) appears to agree with the former view: "It is likely that Edward IV ordered Henry's death: few other individuals would have presumed to carry out such an action without the King's agreement. There is no evidence that Richard was present at the murder". Although, as already explained, Cross does not indicate the date of Henry VI's murder, Cunningham (2003) proposes May 21st 1471, agreeing with Ashdown-Hill (2015: 43).

Carson (2015: 165) interprets that Henry's death "is assumed to have been by judicial murder". This would connect immediately with some ideas that appear in Cross's novel:" It was clear that with the son [Edward of Lancaster] dead, the father must die, too" (Cross, 2017: 194). Following the considerations of Carson and Cross, both the former and the latter share the view that Henry's murder had nothing to do with revenge or evilness but with hierarchy and, of course, Richard was merely a reluctant witness in this matter.

3.3. George, Duke of Clarence.

We have seen that Cross lays the blame of the two previous deaths on Edward IV rather than on Richard. Even so, Richard was still somehow involved in both cases: he led his men at the battle in which Edward of Westminster died and he was expected to decide the manner of king Henry VI's death ordered by his brother. Anyway, the way Cross fills in the gaps of these two murders implies that she rejects the Shakespearean and Tudor tradition in its entirety.

Concerning George, Duke of Clarence's death, the Last Plantagenet's other brother, things might be quite different under Cross's scope.

The Duke of Clarence was executed because he had committed treason as he wanted the throne for himself and he had a bitter relationship both with Edward and Richard. Cunningham (2003: 15) explains this situation:

> He was murdered, allegedly in a barrel of wine, in the Tower in 1478. His death was the result of persistent disloyalty and treason, and the political faction fighting at the Yorkist court during the 1470s. Clarence had rebelled in 1469 and 1470 and allied himself with his brother's enemies Warwick and Queen Margaret. […] That he then continued to dabble in treason […] indicates his arrogant personality and, perhaps, his wish to be king. […] He also clashed bitterly with his brother Richard over the spoils of the Warwick inheritance.

Cross not only agrees with this scholar in the cause of George's death but also in the way it was carried out:

> "What happened to him? He looks as if he bathed in wine" [Asks Richard]
> The man nodded. "He did, sir. Drowned in it."
> "Drowned?"
> "In a butt of malmsey, sir. It is how he asked to die"
> Richard was having trouble taking it in. "He wanted to drown? Why?"
> "He said he had a thirst for justice, sir, and if that thirst would not be quenched, he would satisfy another" (Cross, 2017: 301).

The tradition which states that the Duke of Clarence died drowned in a butt of malmsey wine is taken from Shakespeare's play and Tudor sources. Cross decides to include this version in her work. Cross incorporates this tradition in her novel and suggests that the Duke of Clarence could choose the way he wanted to die. Edward, the king, says the following: "He can choose his method of execution. I promised him that much" (Cross, 2017: 301).

Then again, Cross's reinterpretation does not point to Richard III as the one responsible for his brother's death. On the one hand, she introduces the idea that the king has decided to get rid of his problematic brother, although Edward tries to side-step

his fault: “I will try him, brother. […] The trial will determine whether he dies” (Cross, 2017: 297). Not only the author accuses Edward IV of being George's moral murderer, but also Polydore Vergil and other chroniclers blame king Edward and exonerate Richard of it (Carson, 2003: 13).

In Cross's interpretation Richard rejects Edward's decision: “Richard woke feeling *oppressed* and with a violent headache. He sat up slowly and pressed his fists against his temples. Oh, this is the day one of my brothers kills the other” (Cross, 2017: 301). He even tried to convince him to change his mind: “He is our brother […] Not whether he is good or evil, guilty or innocent” (Cross, 2017: 297).

Cross could have also been influenced by chroniclers who share the view that “Richard was grieved by George’s death” (Mancini[13] in Carson, 2015: 13). In fact, in the novel Cross (2017: 302) adopts this theory and shows that Richard is totally devastated because of his brother’s death: “Grief has made my senses leave me, it seems”.

This I find slightly different in some other interpretations, such as the one by Cunningham: “Richard felt little need to intervene to support his brother when he was eventually tried for treason in 1478” (Cunningham, 2003: 20). It has been also claimed that “Richard was privately not dissatisfied” (More in Carson, 2015: 13). This last view is of coursed based on Tudor propaganda and on the Shakespearian myth.

Nevertheless, Cross also supports the traditional view that Richard had an awkward relationship with the Duke of Clarence. Throughout their lives, they had constantly argued about the Earl of Warwick’s inheritance (their father-in-law, since

[13] Italian cleric who visited London in 1483 who wrote a chronicle on Richard III and his reputation (Carson, 2015: 13).

both George and Richard were married to Isabel and Anne Neville, both heiress to Warwick's vast fortune). George had been the most ambitious of the two and had reluctantly agreed to share the inheritance with Richard after he married Anne (Cunningham, 2003: 20)

When Richard visits the Duke of Clarence in the Tower, he regrets to have done so: "What, exactly, has been his purpose? A few last words spoken in affection, a reconciliation of a friendship they had never had?" (Cross, 2017: 300).

However, there is one aspect shared by some scholars that Cross does not include in *Benediction:* the possible implication of Edward IV's wife in this murder. Cross does not expand on this topic; she simply omits it. Going back to Rozett's theory of filling in the gaps, here the author of the novel decides to leave this information out of her interpretation.

Cunningham proposes the following theory: "his [George's] wish for greater prominence made him vulnerable to manipulation by the *Woodville* family, who are now credited with engineering his downfall" (Cunningham, 2003: 105).

Agreeing with Carson (2015: 23), some other scholars accept that "Richard did hold the Woodvilles responsible for eliminating George of Clarence". Cross might have also followed Ashdown-Hill's consideration (2015: 45):

> No one can possibly claim that this [Duke of Clarence's death] was a murder, because there is absolutely no doubt that Clarence was put to death in the Tower of London, following a trial before Parliament, which had condemned him for treason. Thus, it is impossible to put forward any credible claim that Richard murdered the Duke of Clarence.

Based on a letter that Richard himself wrote, Ashdown-Hill (2015: 46) claims, that he "likewise believed that Elizabeth Woodville had been responsible for the execution of

his own brother George" since he "raised doubts about the validity of Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and therefore also about the right of the couple's children to the throne" (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 46). Anyway, even if Cross omits this interpretation, she supports Ashdown-Hill's opinion that "the responsibility for this death was in no way in the hands of Richard, who, indeed, protested at his brother's execution" (Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 47). This has been introduced in Cross's novel, as explained before.

To sum up, once again Cross would fill in the gaps of George's murder by accusing Edward IV and by releasing Richard from any responsibility. In fact, she portrays a very worried Duke of Gloucester trying to change his eldest brother's mind. Bearing this analysis in mind, it can be concluded that Cross's intention, again, is to demystify the figure of The Last Plantagenet.

2.4 The Princes in the Tower

After Edward IV's natural death, the most controversial matter in Richard III's existence appeared. In the following pages, the case that, agreeing with Cunningham (2003: 44) "was just as much a *mystery* in 1483 as it is today" will be explored : the fate of Edward V and Richard, Duke of York. They were the children of the last king and young Edward was the heir to the throne. Throughout the novel, Cross (2017: 384) presents this character as a rebel teenager: "Young Edward was alternately sickly and imperious. He continued to resent his keepers and released his resentment".

Although the legend highlights the fact that Richard himself killed the princes in order to access the throne, the interpretation of Cross is slightly different.

In *Benediction*, she presents a worried uncle who wants to keep his brother's sons from any harm, since it had recently been discovered that they were bastards due to a previous existent marriage contract between their father and Lady Eleanor Talbot[14]. Richard seizes the crown and from that moment onwards, both Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, were considered bastards and excluded from any legitimate claim to the crown by the Parliament of England which passed the document *Titulus Regius*[15] in 1484.

Once the Princes were barred from the crown by the Parliament of England, problems started to appear. People of the royal court told Richard what should be done with the princes. However, he would not listen. For instance, Buckingham[16] insists that "the real source of trouble is the bastard princes" and that he "would kill the bastards" since it would not be a murder, but "*pure displeasure*", as in the case of Henry VI (Cross, 2017: 384-385). The author seems to be filling in the gaps by reinforcing the scheming thoughts of the Duke of Buckingham.

Anyway, Richard was completely aware of the problem the boys posed for him, since he had been named Regent and Lord Protector by his brother Edward IV; that is, he was responsible for the children's well-being. Besides, he even hesitates about their fate:

> Richard twisted his ring on his finger. A gloom descended on him. When, in all England's history, had a deposed king died a natural death? And when had he crossed that borderland from the arrogance that had let him believe that he, unlike any king before him, could defy the consequences of taking the throne to the despair that he linked to the clamor of the bells? Quiet at intervals, he knew it would return, setting off

[14] Lady Eleanor Talbot (c. 1436-1468), known as Eleanor Butler after marrying Sir Thomas Butler, was a daughter of the 1st Earl of Shrewsbury. After Edward IV's death, she was claimed to had had a prearrangement of marriage with the king, so that Edward's later marriage was invalidated. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Eleanor_Talbot. Last accessed 06.02.2019)

[15] This document "cogently argues for presenting the throne of England to the most eminently qualified candidate available – Richard Plantagenet" (Bryce, http://www.richardiii.ca/titulus-regius-the-title-of-the-king/. Last accessed 05.26.2019).

[16] Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1455 – 1483). He was close to the throne, since three of his relatives were descended from King Edward III (http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/plantagenet_94.html Last accessed 05.26.2019).

> with appalling regularity a rumbling chaos in his head, the certain knowledge that he had no good answer to the disposition of his nephews (Cross, 2017: 385).

Then again, Cross tries to portray Richard in a favourable light by explaining the Duke of Gloucester's difficult position to the readership and by emphasizing the fact that, whatever he did, he would get bad press or would cause discontent in some people. His role as a keeper was quite a challenge. In this way, Cross focuses on The Last Plantagenet's moral doubts.

Cross interprets that the princes just vanished:

> It was simple enough. Three men had come to the Tower with a writ obtaining the release of the lord bastards, for conveyance to Sheriff Hutton. It bore the stamp of the Great Seal, which in Richard's absence was in the keeping of his Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Buckingham. One of the men was a trusted household servant; all three had been in service in the Tower. And Brackenbury recalled that Richard had spoken on more than one occasion of removing the boys from London […] *Why, I'd kill the bastards* (Cross, 2017: 390).

In the above-quoted extract, the inner thoughts of Richard are disclosed. But Cross proposes that the king did nothing: "he resolved to say nothing, to admit to or deny nothing. From this day on, it would be as if the sons of Edward IV had never lived, for all he would have to say on the subject" (Cross, 2017: 395). Notwithstanding, the author explains that he will carry this sorrow throughout years:

> His brother's sons, whom he had sworn to protect, he must assume were dead. He had no idea of the manner of their death, nor where their bodies lay. No matter how much he might regret that, there was a part of him that was relieved at not having to face them for the rest of his life. The relief, too, was a part of his guilt (Cross, 2017: 398).

My analysis is that Cross reinterprets the case by describing an over-reflecting Richard, who cannot assume that his nephews (who were in his care) have just disappeared. In this case, the mystery is not solved since even Richard (as it can be inferred from the previous quote) is not sure of what has happened to the Princes. Even so, Cross fills in the gaps of this mystery by portraying Richard as innocent of the disappearance of his nephews. Still, Richard III feels pitiful and regrets not having taken better care of the boys. Now, he must believe they are dead.

I think that Cross has a clear intention with this reinterpretation of the Princes' disappearance: to show the reader the shame it meant for Richard and how this feeling will accompany him for the rest of his life. It is not that everyone thinks he is a murderer. It is only Richard punishing himself since he believes it is his fault that his nephews are gone. However, in Cross's novel it is not overtly stated whether the rest of the characters think or not that Richard is guilty. The novelist sticks to the mystery.

When, later on, Elizabeth of York asks king Richard whether he has killed or not her brothers, he answers: "I know what you are wondering […] but I am not sparring words with you. I didn't kill them; neither did I order their deaths. […] Your brothers were in my care. I should have been the one to keep them safe. I failed" (Cross, 2017: 422). He considers himself guilty but, again, Cross did not include what actually happened to the boys. Every reached conclusion is just an assumption.

Cross is not the only author who holds that Richard did not kill the Princes, at least on purpose. Cunningham (2003: 44) does not believe these deaths to be a murder carried out by Richard but just a disappearance: "they were never seen again". He also claims that "nothing definite could be discovered of their fate" and that "all of the evidence of Richard's involvement in their deaths is certainly circumstantial" (Cunningham, 2003: 44). Besides, this scholar (2003: 44) adds that "by not demonstrating publicly that they were either alive, or through the trial of some scapegoat, killed without his knowledge, Richard *fuelled speculation that he was aware of, and responsible for, their deaths*". Cross might have been inspired by this theory. Ashdown-Hill (2015: 56) also agrees that "when we come to consider the true fate of the princes in the Tower there is no absolutely certainty as to what became of them". He states that there is no reliable evidence to believe that Richard III was involved in their possible deaths but "since the Devil and his devotees were said to murder children, this

was presumably merely part of the general attempt of the new government to blacken Richard III's reputation" (Cunningham, 2015: 57). However, Ashdown- Hill (2015: 57) has been researching the fate of the kids and, sharing this view with Pamela Tudor-Craig[17], they have come to the conclusion that "there was at least one attempt in July 1483 to access the sons of Edward IV in the Tower of London", although Tudor-Craig believes that the attempt was not "to extract" them but "to murder them" (Tudor-Craig in Ashdown-Hill, 2015: 57). All in all, in Cross's novel we are not told which the intention was, whether it was in order to extract the Princes or to put them to death.

Ashdown-Hill (2015: 58) also believes that it is possible that "Richard considered that his cousin and former supporter, the Duke of Buckingham […] had been behind the attempt to extract the two boys". This seems to be sustained by Cross (2017: 390): "He [Richard] perhaps could be certain that Buckingham had ordered to have the boys killed". However, this is not certain. Then again, Cross does not present a final theory but mere possibilities.

Not only has Cross adapted Cunningham (2003: 44) and Ashdown-Hill's (2015: 56-58) interpretations but also those by authors such as Carson (2015: 199) who states that "the idea that Richard III had the princes killed in the Tower of London, with nobody noticing, is as laughable as the ideas that he killed them and kept it secret" and she concludes that "the obvious conclusion […] is that they disappeared because they were simply moved elsewhere" (2015: 199). She, as the other scholars previously mentioned seem to do too, refuses the traditional versions which were held by chroniclers such as Polydore Vergil and the Crowland's chronicler. They support the

[17] British researcher of medieval art. She is both known because of her academic career and her TV appearances. Tudor-Craig was the curator of the exhibition Richard III at the National Portrait Gallery in 1973. She is well-known because of her contribution to the 1986 TV series *The Secret Life of Paintings* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pamela_Tudor-Craig, Last accessed 05-26-2019).

idea that "Richard sent Tyrell[18] from York to murder them" (Carson, 2015: 171). Carson (2015: 172) explains that The Last Plantagenet faced different options for his nephews: from sending them to a northern castle to even sending them overseas. This author (2015: 201) also explores the hypothesis of what she calls "bones of contention":

> In 1674, some workmen were removing a forebuilding and stairs adjoining […] the Tower of London. In the course of digging down to the foundations they came across some bones at a depth of about 10 ft. The bones were thrown on to a rubbish heap, where they lay until someone thought they might be of significance. […] This was in the reign of Charles II, and the king commissioned for them a white marble urn […] on the supposition that these were the remains of the princes in the Tower, […] and the urn was installed in […] Westminster Abbey. These remains have been there ever since, with nothing more conclusive to identify them than that they are the bones of some children, of unknown gender, found buried under a staircase next to the White Tower.

These bones were examined and investigated in the 1930s and finally they were declared to be those of the Princes. Anyway, today not much credit is given to this hypothesis because of the rudimentary tools and proofs applied to them at that time (Williamson, 1978: 199).

Bearing everything in mind, Cross seems to discard the traditional Tudor and Shakespearean perspective on the murder and/or disappearance of the so-called Princes in the Tower. Instead, she follows diverse interpretations which hold Richard III as totally innocent of the deaths of his nephews, the illegitimate heirs to the throne of England.

3.5. Anne Neville, Wife to Richard III.

It has also been traditionally believed that Richard III would have put to death his wife Anne Neville, who had been previously married to Edward of Lancaster. This belief, again, was spread thanks to the Tudor propaganda and was shared by authors such as William Shakespeare. Still, there are some other interpretations on the matter.

[18] Knight and trusted man of Richard III. Born about 1445 (Bryce, Tracy. 1999: http://www.richardiii.ca/sir-james-tyrell-hero-or-villain/. Last accessed 05.26.2019).

According to Cunningham (2003: 29), "Anne was a sixteen-year-old widow when she married Richard in 1472, but although she and Richard spent most of their short adult lives together, little is known of their marriage". Agreeing with Ashdown-Hill (2015: 99), "their marriage appears to have been happy, but not noticeable productive. Only one living child was born: a son known as Edward of Middleham". When their son passed away, Richard and Anne suffered so much that they were said to be "almost bordering on madness" (Cunningham, 2003: 29). This, the lack of productivity of the marriage in terms of heirs, could have been one of the reasons which led people to think that Richard may have wanted to get rid of his wife in order to remarry.

Authors such as Carson (2015: 290-307) refuse the idea of Richard murdering Anne. Besides, she adds that "Queen Anne Neville, was the very last person Richard III would want to harm, since a huge part of his carefully-built empire in the north hinged on his relationship with her":

> Without going into tedious details about inheritances and estates, suffice it to say that much of Richard's status as lord of the north rested on his being seen as the successor to Anne's father, the famous and powerful Earl of Warwick. For their entire married life the couple occupied the place left vacant by Warwick's death, and although Richard was respected for his just and effective administration, when it came to feudal loyalty (which ran deep in those parts) the people's sense of duty to him arose principally through his connection with the earl (Carson, 2015: 292).

Cross follows this theory and fills in the gaps of Anne's alleged murder in a very similar way:

Why would a man want to kill his wife, who is expected to be the love of his life? According to Cunningham (2003: 93), Richard might have considered to marry dward's daughter Elizabeth of York: so that he could thwart Henry Tudor's plan to marry her. For this reason, it would make sense that Richard III could have wanted to poison Lady Anne Neville. However, Cross does not share this view and she does not fill in the gaps with this information, as it will be explained later.

Cunningham (2003: 93) holds this theory: since in the *Titulus Regius* Parliament declared that Richard's brother Edward had been previously married to Lady Eleanor Butler, this would mean that neither Elizabeth (born in 1466) or her brothers would not be legitimate but bastards. Bearing this fact in mind, this author discards the Tudor theory which accuses Richard of having the intention to marry his own niece. It simply would not make any sense to marry her in order to make Henry Tudor forget about his own claim to the English throne, because, as explained before, Elizabeth of York would have become an illegitimate princess and therefore not eligible as the wife to any king, that is, Richard would not have taken any profit or benefit from this marriage, since his "fiancée" and niece was illegitimate.

Notwithstanding, "after the death of Queen Anne, his former Neville supporters effectively forced Richard to deny publicly that he intended to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York" (Cunningham, 2003: 92). Within the novel, it is not explicitly said whether he finally did it or not.

In *Benediction* the author seems to follow the above-mentioned interpretations which reject the idea of Richard III wanting to marry his bastard niece:

> God help me. Do the people who say such things ever listen to their own words? How would marrying Bess [Elizabeth of York] help my cause, even if she weren't my niece? I declared her brothers bastards. Since she was born of the same union as her brothers, that makes her a bastard too. […] No, I won't do that (Cross, 2017: 418).

In addition, Cross introduces the idea that Lady Anne died because of an illness affecting her lungs. She never mentions the term "tuberculosis", though, which has been historically considered to be the cause of the queen's death (Carson, 2015: 250; Cunningham, 2003: 92).

In the novel, Richard III is not only depicted as innocent of Anne's death but also as a devoted husband, who regrets his wife's suffering and who joyfully remembers the past time they spent together and the love they shared:

> When it was good, there was no dance better than that dance of flesh with spirit that men called love. They had been blessed with their portion of those bright dances. Other times, almost too sharp for memory to hold, there was a mystery he could not explain, that in their coupling they were not alone, but brought others, angels or demons, into their bed, not to dance, but to wrestle, to battle with until they yielded up their names (Cross, 2017: 410).

Once again, the reader can meet the sensitive Richard, who feels pain and sorrow. There is no hint at Richard's involvement in Anne's death since this is a natural death.

It can be concluded that Cross (2017) does not support the idea which claims that Richard III poisoned his wife. Historically speaking and, agreeing with Carson (2015: 250) the rumours that Richard had poisoned Anne started to spread in his own time because physicians had treated her with arsenic and mercury, the usual treatment at that time for tuberculosis.

Moreover, Richard accompanies her during her illness: “he spent long evenings here, his chair by the bed, a stool to prop his feet. He lifted Anne’s hand, holding it lightly in his, her bones like twigs wrapped in skin as fragile as old silk” (Cross, 2017: 409). In fact, he even wishes he would be able to improve his wife’s health: “She slept, her breath shallow and rasping. I’d give you some of mine, if I could, Annie” (Cross, 2017: 408). Nevertheless, Cunningham (2003: 92) states that he presented “reported unwillingness to visit her” but this was mainly due to the fact that the disease was infectious. At some point the court’s physician warns Richard: “it is not safe for you to share your wife’s chamber” (Cross, 2017: 409).

Chroniclers such as John Rous of Warwick[19] share the opinion that Richard III was a serial killer and that he murdered Lady Anne. Shakespeare, too. Anyhow, Cross might have been inspired by the interpretation of scholars such as Ashdown-Hill (2015: 59), who states that "there is absolutely no evidence that Richard ever did anything to bring about the death of his consort, whom he appears to have cared for". This author's interpretation discards the idea presented by Shakespeare which claims that Richard married Anne by persuading her and not because they have fallen in love with each other:

> Richard and Anne almost certainly already knew each other well, and the possibility of their marriage had probably been explored much earlier, in the 1460's, before Anne's father changed ideas and married her to Edward of Westminster for political reasons (Ashdown-Hill 2015: 93).

This is exactly the version that Cross supports. In her novel, they both are in love before getting married. Ashdown-Hill (2015: 103) agrees with Cunningham (2003: 93) regarding Richard's intentions to marry his niece. He planned a marriage for her niece, but not with him. Following Ashdown-Hill's (2015: 104) theory, Richard intended Elizabeth to marry Manuel of Portugal, Duke of Viseu and Beja:

> For Richard, Elizabeth was a royal bastard, and the marriage he planned for her was to a cadet member of the Portuguese royal family. When the marriage was planned in 1484-85, it would only have given her the rank of a princess and a royal duchess. […] Elizabeth was delighted at the prospect of a foreign royal marriage which would restore her officially to royal status.

Historically speaking, there is evidence that Richard planned a marriage to Joanna of Portugal, sister to the Portuguese king and cousin to the Duke of Viseu and Beja. However, Cross does not adapt this fact in *Benediction*. The only aspect regarding marriage after Anne's death is Richard's refusal to marry his niece (Cross, 2017: 418).

[19] John Rous was a Warwickshire antiquary and chantry priest who compiled *The Rous Roll* (1484), one of England's treasure from the Middle Ages. The book narrates the deeds of the Earl of Warwick and includes 65 pen unframed pictures (https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-rous-roll. Last accessed 05.26.2019).

Refusing the idea of poisoning, Ashdown-Hill (2015: 106) claims that although Richard was deeply impacted by his wife's sickness and death, his possible remarriage "was also an affair of state" due to the fact that he was the king of England:

> It was a vital matter in terms of the future of the royal succession in England, given that in 1485 Richard had no surviving legitimate child. Thus, all the evidence clearly indicates that the royal council was aware that Anne was dying, before she actually passed away, and that the members had already begun to advise the king to negotiate a second, and royal marriage as a matter of urgency (Ashdown-Hill 2015: 106).

Not only Cross (2017: 418) reinterpret these ideas in her work but also has Anne herself urging Richard to find a new consort: "I am so afraid for you. Because I gave you no heirs. […] Now you must marry again. […]" (Cross, 2017: 414).

Taking everything into account, Cross succeeds on her attempt to reassess Richard III's moral dimension regarding his wife's death and absolves him of any guilt in it.

4. Conclusions

Throughout this study, an analysis of Cross's reinterpretation of both the physical and the moral dimensions of Richard III in her work *Benediction* has been carried out. Besides, Rozett's theory of "filling in the gaps" and her recent definition of the genre of New Historical Fiction have been briefly explained in order to discover whether Cross reassessed Richard's historical reputation and how she undertook this task, especially concerning some aspects of the king's historical figure, such as the different crimes he was accused of in the Shakespearean play and the Tudor propaganda and his growth and development both as a man and as a monarch.

At this stage of the dissertation, some final thoughts may be considered. As for the physical representation of Richard III, Cross chose to avoid giving deep or further

details of his bodily depiction with a clear purpose: to focus on his personality rather than on his appearance. She definitely succeeded by offering the reader a new perspective on The Last Plantagenet and by discarding the idea that he ever had a hunchback. However, even though Cross did not include a detailed physical description of the character, she seems to agree with and to have considered the scientific results of the analysis of Richard's remains.

Likewise, the chapter on Richard's moral dimension implies that Cross continued in the same vein, i.e.: she tried to demystify his historical figure and reputation. The author points to Edward IV as blameworthy for many of the murders traditionally attributed to Richard, such as the death of Edward Lancaster, the assassination of the deposed king Henry VI and, of course, the murder of the Duke of Clarence. By exonerating and holding Richard III innocent of them, Cross reassesses the traditional moral stance of the Duke of Gloucester and fills in the gaps in quite a different way than Tudor propaganda and historiography did. With respect to the case of Edward IV's sons, who were in Richard's charge, Cross maintains the view that they were just taken from the Tower and were never heard of again. Additionally, she rejects the theory which supports that The Last Plantagenet poisoned his wife, Lady Anne Neville. By sharing the interpretation of some other scholars such as Carson (2015) and Ashdown-Hill (2015) she considers him innocent of this alleged murder by identifying the cause of Anne's death as natural, due to an illness; even though she does not state whether Lady Anne suffered from tuberculosis or not. Anyhow, Cross's adaptation of Richard's moral dimension does not only rest on her reinterpretation of his moral dimension but also scans his personality and inner thoughts. Thus, the novelist characterises Richard as a humble, sensitive, empathic man who differs greatly from the Richard of Shakespeare and the Tudor historiography. Through made-up dialogues,

monologues and inner reflections, Cross provides her readers with a positive reassessment of this controversial character.

It can therefore be claimed that Virginia Cross successfully demystifies Richard in his two dimensions: the physical and the moral ones. She follows in the footsteps of Rozett (2003) regarding the genre of New Historical Fiction and, in addition, she creates an atmosphere of trust between the reader and the main character of her story, in a way that the readership forgets about the traditional and mythical image of Richard as a scheming and cursed king and is offered the possibility of getting to know a human being, a monarch of his time and circumstances.

It is possible that Richard's demystification will be kept in the future since the vast majority of historical novels published after the 2012 discovery describe him in a kind way, just like the one by Cross. If this possibility eventually materialises, the conception and historical reputation of Richard III will finally change and become part of the British and worldwide culture. Ultimately, the stereotypical monster of the Tudor chroniclers and Shakespeare will vanish and will be obliterated.

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6. Appendix

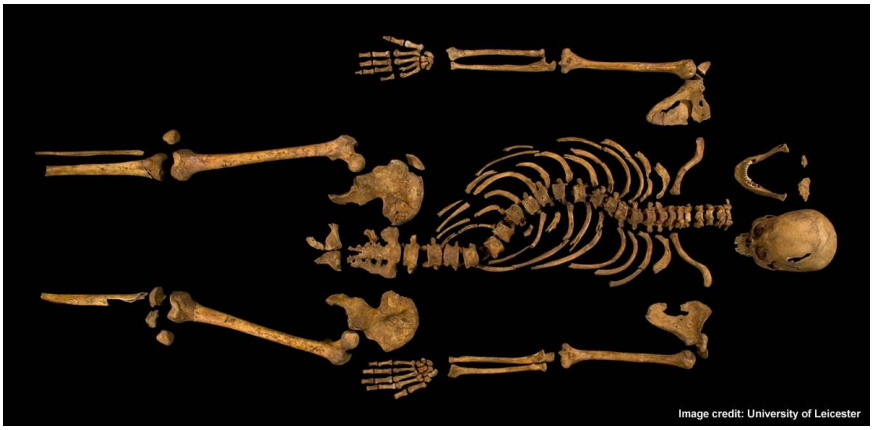

Image 1: Scanned image of Richard III's skeleton.
Image Credit: University of Leicester
(https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/science/osteology-3-analysing.html. Last accessed 05.26.2019)

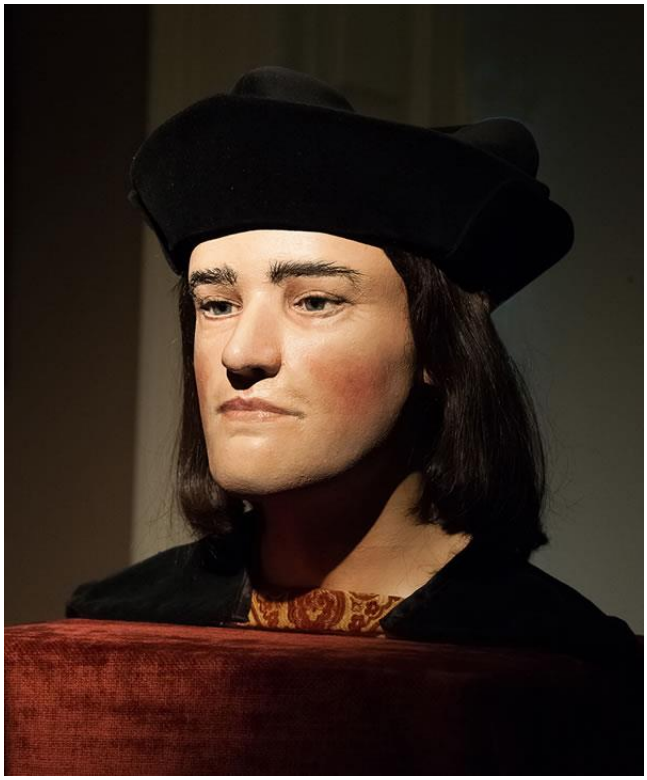

Image 2: Richard's facial reconstruction by Professor Caroline Wilkinson.
Image credit: University of Leicester
(https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/science/facevoice.html . Last accessed 05.26.2019)